

# Is Your Town Walker Friendly?

Convenient access to a safe and enjoyable walking environment can greatly influence the success of any walking program. Experts generally agree that the following qualities are necessary to promote walking:

- Networks of sidewalks and trails
- Few barriers to pedestrians
- Safe, aesthetically pleasing walking environments
- Compact and diverse development, offering plenty of walking destinations.

## What can you do?

The Partnership for a Walkable America – a coalition of public and private sector organizations that promotes health, safety, and access for walkers – elaborates on these qualities. Here are their suggestions for how you can help promote a walking culture:

### 1. Plentiful places to walk

- Help maintain walking paths by keeping the sidewalk in front of your own house clear of plants, snow, debris, etc.
- Petition your city government for sidewalks on all roads and lots of crosswalks. Support — or even lead — efforts to build more trails and pathways.

### 2. Few impassable barriers

- If roadways, rivers, or train tracks block logical walkways, don't simply accept another route
- Report the areas and propose solutions to your local traffic engineer or public works department; be sure to alert local media to the problem.

### 3. Safe for walkers

- Drive carefully, and always stop to let pedestrians cross
- Volunteer to be a school crossing guard
- Petition local government for traffic controls and "traffic calming" devices like speed bumps, medians for wide roads, or traffic circles
- Keep your dog leashed or fenced; ask your neighbors to do the same
- Report poorly lit areas or broken street lights to police
- Start a crime-walk program in your neighborhood.

### 4. Pleasing aesthetics

- Keep your own neighborhood beautiful by taking a small plastic bag with you on your walks to pick up trash along the way
- Plant trees, flowers, and shrubs in your yard
- Organize a community clean-up day, or volunteer trail maintenance efforts.

### 5. Compact, diverse development

- Instead of driving to the mall in the next town, support your local merchants by walking to shops near where you live; if you can't get what you need close to home, try bicycling or public transportation
- Attend zoning board and development meetings; let them know you want stores, churches, schools, and theaters within walking distance of where you live and work.

